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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4053
INFO RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 8817
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5339
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1062
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 1154
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0612
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0219
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0104
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0034
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0506
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0604
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0615
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MUMBAI 001310

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STATE FOR OPS CENTER, S/CT, SCA/INS, DS, DS/IP/ITA, DS/IP/SCA

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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV KISL CASC ASEC PK IN

SUBJECT: AS DEATH TOLL NEARS 200, CONTOURS OF MUMBAI BOMBING INVESTIGATION BEGIN TO EMERGE

REF: A) MUMBAI 1309, B) MUMBAI 890 AND PREVIOUS C) MUMBAI 1261

CLASSIFIED BY: Michael Owen, Consul General, Consulate General Mumbai, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) Despite the local media's poor track record in handling on-the-record remarks, enough reputable media outlets have directly attributed a particular theory of the Mumbai train bombings to senior police leadership that the contours of the investigation are emerging. If the state's media is to be believed, the state's top police leadership has squarely blamed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) for orchestrating the bombings and have accused the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) of providing operational assistance. The top three suspects, believed to be Indian Muslims, were already on the state's most-wanted list for their suspected role in the large arms and explosives cache seized in Aurangabad and environs in May. Police reportedly also suspect that the men were behind an unsuccessful train bombing in Ahmedabad and the discovery of bomb making components at the Mumbai/Byculla station earlier this year. The linkage of the Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Aurangabad events, and the LeT/SIMI nexus, are consistent with the view, which we repeatedly hear from both police and Muslim contacts, that outside groups use local Muslim communities for courier and logistical support to launch terror attacks in western India. If, however, local Muslims were among the masterminds of the July 11 bombings, it would signal a new and worrisome sign that home-grown terrorist capabilities may be emerging in western India's large and diverse Muslim community. End summary.

Leads Point to LeT and Shadowy SIMI

¶ 12. (SBU) As local media and the public attempt to make sense out of the July 11 bombings that killed, at latest count, around 200 persons, inconsistent versions of events and conflicting conspiracy theories abound between news casts and newspapers. Senior Maharashtra police officials have yet to make official public statements on who they believe to be responsible for the bombings. The situation is further confused because local journalists frequently create quoted or on-the-record remarks out of whole cloth.

¶ 13. (SBU) Maharashtra Chief Minister V. Deshmukh told the media on July 13 that the police were still searching for leads to the perpetrators behind the bombings. At the same time, however, enough reputable media outlets directly attributed a particular theory of the bombings to senior police leadership that it merits immediate attention. According to these media outlets, the Maharashtra Director General of Police Dr. P.S. Pasricha, Mumbai Police Commissioner A.N. Roy, and the head of Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad K.P. Raghuvanshi, have squarely blamed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) for orchestrating the July 11 Mumbai train bombings and have accused the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) of providing operational assistance. They also identified the three main suspects in the case as being behind the large arms and explosives cache smuggled into Maharashtra in May, which the police also characterized as a joint LeT/SIMI operation, according to these news stories. Police reportedly also suspect that the men were behind unsuccessful train bombing attempts in Ahmedabad in February, where a mistimed bomb detonated in an empty station, and in March at Mumbai's Byculla train station, where suspected bomb making components were recovered from a station restroom.

¶ 14. (U) In these reports, the three main suspects are supposedly locals with ties to both LeT and SIMI. Zahibuddin Ansari

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(a.k.a. Sayyad Zabiuddin Sayyad Zakiuddin, Zabi Ansari, Nabi Ansari) is allegedly an electrician from Beed in central rural Maharashtra. He was identified in ref A as leading an effort to smuggle large amounts of firearms and RDX explosives into the state in May. Mohammed Faiyaz (a.k.a. Faiyaz Kagzi) is allegedly a native of Aurangabad. "Rahil" or "Raheel" was reportedly described by Commissioner Roy as a SIMI "old timer" who once ran a travel agency in Mumbai and has some expertise at passport forgery. In addition to these primary suspects, police have detained over 350 residents of Malad, a large Mumbai slum, in an effort to apprehend and question SIMI operatives. Papers report that most of those detained are petty thieves and local goons, however.

Police Views on LeT Activities in Western India

¶ 15. (C) An LeT connection is consistent with what the Mumbai police have told us in the past. In a discussion prior to the July 11 bombings (see ref C), J.J. Singh of the state police's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) told us that the modus operandi of the Aurangabad weapons seizure pointed towards a Pakistan or Kashmir connection, although he stressed that the police had no conclusive evidence of a link. Some of the young men arrested in Aurangabad, all of whom were believed to be couriers without knowledge of the larger operation, had received training in Pakistan or Kashmir, Singh told us. More generally, Singh contended that terror groups from outside the Indian heartland were the true perpetrators of terror attacks in western India. For example, he noted that the police believed the three operatives killed in the failed attack on RSS headquarters earlier this year were probably foreigners.

¶ 16. (C) Other observers of terror trends in the region have told us that they believe that Pakistan's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is helping Kashmiri groups develop the capacity to launch strikes deep inside India. Sundeep Waslekar, President of the Strategic Foresight Group, a

Mumbai think tank, had told us that he's convinced that the RSS attacks had a Pakistan connection. Ali Asgar Engineer, a respected Sunni Muslim human rights activist and writer, told us after the bombings that he is convinced of ISI backing for the LeT's efforts to establish a foothold in the city's Muslim community.

Explosives May Provide Link to Aurangabad Seizures

¶ 7. (C) In addition to whatever evidence the police may possess linking the three accused to prior bombing attempts, police also believe that the 43 kilograms of RDX explosives recovered in the May Aurangabad smuggling bust was only part of a larger shipment (ref A). The RDX that was not discovered was used in the July 11 bombings, police are speculating. Post police sources believe that RDX was used on July 11, but it is unknown to us whether police have matched it forensically to the RDX recovered in May.

The LeT/SIMI Nexus

¶ 8. (C) If the police do suspect that both LeT and SIMI were behind the attacks, it would be consistent with the view, taken by both police and the Muslim community before the bombings, that outside terror groups plan and execute attacks in western India and use local Muslim communities for support and logistical purposes. According to this scenario, LeT plotted and carried out the attack and used SIMI for local support and organization. SIMI is a shady organization that was banned in India in the year 2000. It had a strong presence in Mumbai and after the ban even kept an unmanned office in Mumbai that was

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raided by police on July 13. Singh of the Maharashtra ATS told us earlier that SIMI had no formal organizational structure. Rather, Singh said, SIMI was more "a state of mind" of poorly educated and dissatisfied young Muslim men who were prone to extremist thinking and action. Membership or proximity to SIMI was constantly shifting among young Muslims in Mumbai, Singh said. The amorphous nature of the SIMI made it difficult for the police to assess the group's true strength and size, he said.

Is Terrorism Growing Roots in Mumbai?

¶ 9. (C) According to most reports, the police believe that the three main suspects now on the run played a key role in the bombings. It would be noteworthy if the police in fact now believe that local Muslims played a key role in the planning and execution of a terrorist attack. Terrorism has no roots in western India's large and diverse Muslim community, we regularly hear from both police sources and from the region's Muslims themselves. Our interlocutors say that outside extremist and terror groups have, at best, only been successful in establishing sleeper cells of young men who serve as couriers or provide, often unwittingly, logistical support (ref B).

¶ 10. (C) Prior to the July 11 Mumbai train bombings the police told us that they had no reason to assume the existence of home-grown terror groups that were capable of planning and executing a terrorist attack of any significant magnitude. Roy, Pasricha and Raghuvanshi have all been unavailable to brief us in the days after the July 11 train bombings, but if statements attributed to them in the local media are an indication of their thinking then the police may be reexamining their views on the presence of Islamic terrorism in Mumbai and western India.

Comment

¶11. (C) The linkage of the Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Aurangabad events, and the LeT/SIMI nexus, are consistent with the view, which we repeatedly hear from both police and local Muslim contacts, that outside groups use local Muslim communities for courier and logistical support to launch terror attacks in western India. If, however, local Muslims were among the masterminds of the July 11 bombings, it would signal a new and worrisome sign that home-grown terrorist capabilities may be emerging in western India's large and diverse Muslim community.

End comment.

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